

ARTICLES FROM THE

70'S

ABOUT

MICHAEL DRAKE

FRANKLIN -  
HALES CORNERS

## HUB

**5 Musicians Link Talents  
To Delight of Jazz Lovers**

By Peter Grendysa

Every Tuesday night, an enthusiastic crowd of music lovers and jazz buffs has been descending on Giorgi's at 68th and Forest Home in Greenfield, to listen to one of the area's newest combos.

"Nexus" is a Latin word meaning link or interconnection, but few in the audience can be expected to dwell for long on the significance of that while the five man group Nexus is performing.

"What we play is high-energy jazz," says trumpet player Mike Drake.

To those who think of Louis Armstrong or Al Hirt when "jazz" is mentioned, a re-education is offered. Once into the first set of the evening, there is no doubt about the high-energy and the jazz is beautiful and potent.

The group has been appearing together only since the end of April, although the sum total of the member's experience in music approaches 100 years.

"Unlike many other group," relates keyboard artist Keith Montross, "we hit it off together very well right from the start. There is a certain rapport that is very hard to define and our musical goals are similar."

This rapport between the musicians is transmitted to their audience and the ease with which the members slipped into playing together as a tightly-knit team suggested the Nexus title.

Nexus originated with Dan Torroll, guitar, and Rick Nieznanski, bass, who had been playing in various groups together for some years. Dan's brother, Mark, is a member of the highly regarded Sweetbottom, Giorgi's house band.

Perry Giorgi, owner of the club, asked Dan to form a new band. At the same time, Mike Drake was looking for players for a band and came in contact with Dan.

Nexus was the result.

Jazz is the extension and sum of life and Nexus reflects the experience and dedication of the musicians in the group. Mike Drake, a native of Denver and a Milwaukee resident for the past five year, started playing trumpet while in high school.

After studying music at the University of Tulsa and at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, he played in several Las Vegas show bands and toured extensively in the United States and Canada. He was,



for a time, choir director at St. Boniface church in Milwaukee. Keith Montross of Mequon studied music education at Lawrence college in Appleton and taught fourth through eighth grade music. He is a veteran of several small bands in this area.

Dan Torroll moved to Greendale from Chicago eight years ago and attended the Wisconsin Conservatory of Music. He has done considerable road work and now teaches at Brass Bell, Ltd., as does Keith.

Rick Nieznanski, a native Milwaukeean, first picked up his bass while in grade school, played in the eighth grade band and was a member of Milwaukee Tech's Jazz Ensemble. An associate

degree in music from Milwaukee Area Technical college and work with local bands followed.

Ding Lorenz, percussionist and also a Milwaukeean, is an extra with the Milwaukee Symphony orchestra. He has been playing percussion since the age of 7 and attended Wisconsin College Conservatory. With Nexus, he plays drums, vibes, congas, steel drums and his "gong wall" containing an array of exotic instruments.

The first professional appearance of Nexus, following a month of rehearsals, was at the Kenwood Inn, where they substituted for Matrix in the last week of April. Their present job at Giorgi's started May 3 and they appeared for two days at Summerfest. The group is slated to work at the Alewives Jazz festival and will appear at state fair.

Their current one night schedule is augmented by four days of practice sessions every week and the results are gratifying to the ear and to the eye. Jazz if the high energy mode by contemporary composers is interspersed with original compositions of varying complexity.

All of the members display their particular talents in frequent long solos. Typical of jazz lovers, the audience sits captivated and attentive while the combo is playing and especially inventive solos are rewarded by bursts of applause and cheers.

Nexus is helping solidify the growing reputation of Giorgi's as the Milwaukee area jazz spot, a reputation that is spreading nationwide. The group has set high goals of musicianship and professionalism and is striving to produce more original material. Giorgi's offers an ideal setting for their efforts and the jazz fans of Milwaukee will reap the benefits of this partnership.

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# 5 Jazzmen Take Different Roads, Meet as Nexus

A BLOND, MUSCULAR MAN named Michael Drake stood behind the huge congas, eying the sparse audience at Georgi's. He lifted his trumpet, his fingers poised above its valves. He slowly brought the horn to the ear height of his audience, as if he were taking aim with a rifle.

Then the room exploded as the five musicians who make up Nexus opened their set with "Butterfly."

Rarely does a name tell a story as well as theirs. "Nexus means a coming together from different directions," keyboardist Ron Montross said. A former Whitefish Bay music teacher, who now works at a local music store, Montross is a graduate of Lawrence University who played with an 18 piece jazz ensemble there. He concerns himself with things like the group's dynamics and the esthetics of music.

At the other end of the spectrum are guitarist Dan Torrell and Rick Nieznanski, who worked their way up from playing in the basement of Torrell's home.

The group came together last spring and has centered its work around a common interest — playing jazz — and a common goal — working five nights a week at what they like to do.

AT THE CENTER OF NEXUS is trumpeter / flugel-hornist Drake, 26, a far removed descendant of the noted English explorer and sea captain, Sir Francis Drake. The son of Gordon Drake, president of American College in Muskego, he lived everywhere from Colorado to New Jersey during his younger days.

In every city, Drake tried to take music lessons. Some of the best he ever received, he recalled were in New Jersey from a trumpeter named Ed Bischoff who was confined to a wheelchair.

"He lived in a trailer out in the marshes of New Jersey. He had a hunchback and was missing the thumb and forefinger on his playing hand. And I figured if he could play, I could, too."

Later, Drake studied trumpet with Rafael Mendez. After a year at the University of Tulsa and two more at the University of Wisconsin — Milwaukee (during which he played with the Family at Max), Drake spent eight months on the road with the Mexicali Brass, a show band that, in Drake's words, played "Tijuana Brass, Dixieland and standards.

"It helped a lot in the development of my musical

NEXUS: from left — Ding Lorenz, Dan Torrell, Keith Montross, Rick Nieznanski and Michael Drake.



strength. I had to play six nights a week for my lip to be strong. Now I can concentrate on pure musical painting.

"I could have gone into acting or theater, but I'm a religious man and I felt that I had to play for 'the glory of the Lord.' I know that sounds kind of schmaltzy, but I just felt it's something I had to do."

RICH NIEZNANSKI on bass and Dan Torrell on guitar came up through the rock circles. Torrell is finishing the last three credits of an associate degree in jazz at MATC. He started as did a large number of musicians, playing in a rock band.

"Our first job was at some teen center," he said. "Like a lot of guys, I was probably most influenced by the Beatles and Jimi Hendrix." Nieznanski met Torrell in high school, and later played heavy metal a la King Crimson in the same local rock band.

Torrell is the third of three brothers to take up music. He studied two semesters at the Wisconsin Conservatory of Music. One brother, Mark, is the drummer with Sweetbottom, Georgi's regular band and the group that produced Darryl Stuermer, who now plays with Jean-Luc Ponty.

Nieznanski and Torrell shared an interest in jazz of the type played by the Mahavishnu orchestra and one of its members, guitar guru par excellence, John McLaughlin.

"I had been exposed to jazz before," Nieznanski recalled, "but the thing that really got me off on it was hearing the Mahavishnu Orchestra at the first Summerfest. I didn't know it then, but Rick was at the same concert."

Torrell went out and bought their records and began jamming on Mahavishnu music in the basement of his parents' home. "We tried playing a lot of things, but that's what we always came back to," Torrell said.

DRUMMER DING LORENZ BEGAN learning drums at 6 and marched with champion drum and bugle corps

in his early teens. "When I was 11, my dad would drive me down to Chicago once a week to play with the Cavaliers."

The Cavs, won the national championship as did the Royalaires, another group to which Lorenz belonged. He also played with Stuermer and toured with the Bloomsbury People, Sigmund Snopek's first group.

"Touring is OK, if you can go first class, and if you're staying at good places," Lorenz said. Unfortunately, neither was the case with the group.

"I'd never do it again, driving with six guys in a car between gigs," Lorenz said. "It's just no good."

Lorenz's teacher in percussion is Tely Lesbines, percussionist with the Milwaukee Symphony, and he has played in several shows, including ballets and operas.

"I can get dressed up in a tuxedo and go down and hit a triangle a couple times with the symphony, but that's just a job," he said. "Here I make lousy money, but every musician has a certain amount of artist in him."

"THE WHOLE THING that ticks me off is that some club owners still refuse to pay you a decent wage because you play jazz. I consider musicians professional people, like doctors or lawyers. They're trained professionals. There's not one person in this band with less than 15 years' experience.

"I have from \$4,000 to \$5,000 in instruments on stage and they could care less."

But all the band members know that Georgi's is one of the better clubs to play, and that its regulars appreciate good jazz.

So on any Tuesday night, they put their all into everything from original works like Montross' "Toreador" to better known tunes like Chick Corea's "If."

"This band had good electricity right from the beginning," Drake said of the group's interworking. "And we plan to take it just as far as we can go."

— DENNIS GETTO



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# Jazz Band, TV Station

## Combine for a First

By Bill Milkowski

Special to The Journal.

When the cameras begin rolling at the Bull Ring Ltd. next Tuesday night it'll be a first for both the house band, Nexus, and the TV station, WMVS, Channel 10.

For Nexus it will mean another step forward in its transition from a basement band to a professional production. And for Channel 10

it will be an experiment in live videotaping from such a remote setting as a jazz nightclub. The audience will be live, the music will be live and once the cameras begin rolling there's no turning back. No film editing.

In the short time Nexus has been rehearsing with the Musicale 10 / 36 big band and psyching up for its first TV spot on Channel 10's

"Talent Showcase" series, it has come to learn more about audience perceptions and the fine art of condensing.

### No 20 Minute Solos

"There's so much action being condensed on television shows. Now people are used to seeing one car chase, five murders and one guy solving it all in a half hour," said bassist Rick Nieznansky. "We have to think more in

terms of the production element — a stage presence that helps communicate more directly to the audience. So you won't see any 20 minute bass solos or anything like that."

Said keyboard player Keith Montross, "The meat has got to be dealt with right away." Montross handles most of the writing for the group. "The solos have to get to the point right away, rather than

evolve into an idea naturally."

The four pieces to be videotaped for delayed broadcast on the "Talent Showcase" June 24 and June 29 are "Maelstrom" and "My Sovereign Destiny" by Montross, "Spanish Fly" by guitarist Dan Torroll and a very condensed arrangement of Eddie Harris' "Freedom Jazz Dance."

### Ideas Extended

With backing by the 15 piece Musicale 10 / 36 big band, the regular harmonic ideas of Nexus will be extended and enhanced with new colors and tone. Instead of the one trumpet of Mike Drake, there will be five trumpets. Flutes, oboes and saxes will be highlighted where there weren't any before. "It'll be more tasty than just rock 'n' roll guitar and loud trumpet," said Torroll.

Even without the big band accompaniment, Nexus is far more sophisticated than just a lot of rock 'n' roll guitar and loud trumpet. Since landing this steady gig five nights a week at the Bull Ring, the group has developed a maturity that comes only from playing together regularly. The band is noticeably tighter, and the communication among the members is clearer.

### "Direction Refined"

"Our direction as a group has been refined," said trumpet player Drake. "We're more succinct, more con-

Turn to Nexus, page 9, col. 2



—Journal Photo by Dale Guldán

Nexus, house band at the Bull Ring, Ltd.





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## Performance to Be Televised

*From Page 1*

trolled, now. When we formed the group a year ago our ideas were more sporadic, but now we've brought things more to a focus."

Nexus used to call itself a high energy jazz group, then a jazz-rock group, and now prefers to avoid labels altogether.

"I don't relate it to jazz at all," explained Torroll. "I don't think of it as a fusion of just jazz and rock, because that's much too narrow. I like elements of rock, open soloing, arranged tunes, show tunes, spontaneity — these are elements we've all come in contact with and I feel comfortable with all of them.

But we have to be careful to balance all these elements so that none outweighs the other."

Added Montross:

"The word jazz still has so many connotations that it can confuse and even alienate certain people. But we want to approach our music on more of a communication level. Our sets are designed with the idea of taking an audience on an hour's worth of movement and leaving them wanting more at the end."

Since recently acquiring drummer Ron Traudt, the group has crystallized its package and is already thinking in terms of recording. National artists Grover

Washington and Joe Sample as well as an influential contact at Capitol Records have expressed interest in circulating a demo tape of Nexus, which should be its next project after the TV show.

Following in the tradition of other Bull Ring alumni, namely Sweetbottom and Montage, this group has its sights on bigger things. And Nexus just might have the talent and conviction to pull it off.

"Jimmy Sardino has offered us the opportunity to be different in his club," Montross said, "and now we're trying to make it happen. It's taken us a year to get to this point, and some bands never make it."



Milwaukee Journal 1978

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Watch The Video

By Bill Milkowski



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point right away, rather than evolve into an idea naturally, the four pieces to be videotaped for delayed broadcast on the "Talent Showcase" June 24 and June 29 are "Maelstrom" and "My Sovereign Destiny" by Montross, "Spanish Fly" by guitarist Dan Torroll and a very condensed arrangement of Eddie Harris' "Freedom Jazz Dance." Ideas Extended With backing by the 15-piece Musicale 10 / 36 big band, the regular harmonic ideas of Nexus will be extended and enhanced with new colors and tone. Instead of the one trumpet of Mike Drake, there will be five trumpets. Flutes, oboes and saxes will be highlighted where there weren't any before. "It'll be tastier than just rock 'n' roll guitar and loud trumpet," said Torroll. Even without the big band accompaniment, Nexus is far more sophisticated than just a lot of rock 'n' roll guitar and loud trumpet. Since landing this steady gig five nights a week at the Bull Ring, the group has developed a maturity that comes only from playing together regularly. The band is noticeably tighter, and the communication among the members is clearer. "Our direction as a group has been refined," said trumpet player Drake. "We're more succinct, more controlled, now. When we formed the group a year ago our ideas were more sporadic, but now we've brought things more to focus." Nexus used to call itself a high energy jazz group, then a jazz-rock group, and now prefers to avoid labels altogether. "I don't relate it to jazz at all," explained Torroll. "I don't think of it as a fusion of just jazz and rock, because that's much too narrow. I like elements of rock, open soloing, arranged tunes, show tunes, spontaneity — these are elements we've all come in contact with and feel comfortable with all of them. But we have to be careful to balance all these elements so that none outweighs the other." Added Montross: "The word jazz still has so many connotations that it can confuse and even alienate certain people. But we want to approach our music on more of a communication level. Our sets are designed with the idea of taking an audience on an hour's worth of movement and leaving them wanting more at the end." Since recently acquiring drummer Ron Traudt, the group has crystallized its package and is already thinking in terms of recording. National artists Grover Washington and Joe Sample as well as an influential contact at Capitol Records have expressed interest in circulating a demo tape of Nexus, which should be its next project after the TV show. Following in the tradition of other Bull Ring alumni, namely Sweetbottom and Montage, this group has its sights on bigger things. And Nexus just might have the talent and conviction to pull it off. "Jimmy Sardino has offered us the opportunity to be different in his club," Montross said, "and now we're trying to make it happen. It's taken us a year to get to this point, and some bands never make it."





—Journal Photo

Nexus, a high energy jazz group

# Group Builds on Musical Talk

By Anne Mason  
of The Journal Staff

There is a new language being communicated in Milwaukee. The language of Nexus.

According to the dictionary, the word 'nexus' means interconnection. In terms of Milwaukee, Nexus is the newest in high energy jazz groups.

But the dictionary definition does apply, for the group's primary concern is a close musical and philosophical connection between members.

Such a relationship is the basis for successful communication with listening audiences, say the five Nexus musicians.

And that, after all, is what the music business is all about. At least that is what it is about to Nexus trumpeter, Michael Drake.

Drake is the group's leader by way of his front position in the Nexus stage formation.

The Nexus connection is the result of the members' willingness to lend an ear.

"Musically, it has been similar to learning a language," said Drake. "Each of us listens to what the other says on his instrument."

## Conversations in Music

Much of the group's playing is characterized by instrument conversation — between electric guitar and keyboards, for example.

But conversation among members themselves is just as common.

"We sit down at least once a week, to talk and plan," said Drake. "It's healthy, just like in a marriage."

In the beginning, it was decided that Montrose would be the star composer, with Drake and Torroll doing the arranging of already written music.

"Both Dan and I would like the time to do some original things," said Drake. "But, we know Keith is a good writer, so we say, 'Okay.'"

## Strives for Feeling

"Music is a means of expression," he explained. "And as musicians we want to get the feeling across."

What comes across at a Nexus gig is high energy, but never hyper jazz.

The music is like an excited child, full of vim and vigor.

Yet even when the sound is really cooking, there is a rhythmic calm simmering underneath.

"We have tried to avoid a nervous sound," said guitarist Dan Torroll. He noted that Nexus drummer Ding Lorenz is especially bent on keeping the group's energy from becoming frenetic.

It was with Lorenz and trumpeter Drake that Nexus had its beginning four months ago.

## Story Traced

To make that long and complicated story short, let's just say Lorenz and Drake were old playing partners who happened upon three musicians in search of a group: guitarist Torroll, bassist Rick Nieznanski and keyboard artist Keith Montrose.

"It's amazing how fast we were able to come together as musicians," said Montrose who is credited with naming the group.

"To play well together, musicians must connect in terms of both ability and attitude," he added. "And we do."

## Tight Music

Montrose, a former grade school music teacher in the Whitefish Bay School System, has given the group five original pieces. Among them are: "Indigo Passions," a cool number jazzed up by light and lively keyboard rhythms; "Jamaica Sunrise," a tone poem or musical description of a rise-and-shine mood; and "Merb," a mellow piece lifted by feathery percussion sounds.

Among the group's favorite recorded sounds are those of Chuck Mangione, the Becker Brothers, Pat Martino and George Duke.

Nexus renditions of such music go heavy on the percussion as do Montrose's compositions.

## Much Percussion

"All of us play percussion in one number or another," said Drake.

But drummer Lorenz, who has a private collection of an estimated 750 to 1,000 percussion instruments, is definitely the specialist.

Each Tuesday when the group sets up for its three set show down at Giorgio's, 6869 W. Forest Home Ave., Lorenz brings with him vibes, a marimba, a timpani, bongos, gongs, a glockenspiel, a Chinese bell tree, a Chinese fertility drum and, of course, a basic drum set.

It is in the playing of these percussion instruments, especially by Lorenz, that the group's energy is kept from becoming frantic.

But calm does not mean anticlimactic. In fact, climax is a major part of the group's character.

## Formula Used

"We use a build and release formula," said Drake. "We use it throughout the night, within sets and within individual numbers. It gets the audience involved."

"Our biggest applause always comes at the end of a high point in the music."

"It's like riding a horse that wants to run. For awhile you hold back on the reins. Then you let go. That way the run is more exciting."

Exciting Milwaukee audiences to the language of Nexus is the group's immediate aim.

"We would like to be able to make a living playing," said Drake, who like the group's other members, holds down more jobs in the music field.

Nexus will have its chance to speak to many Milwaukeeans June 30 and July 1 when it appears at the Summerfest Miller Jazz Oasis.

## Milwaukee Journal Accent 1977

### Group Builds on Musical Talk

By Anne Mason



There is a new language being communicated in Milwaukee. The language of Nexus. According to the dictionary, the word 'nexus' means interconnection. In terms of Milwaukee, Nexus is the newest in high energy jazz groups. But the dictionary definition does apply, for the group's primary concern is a close musical and philosophical connection between members. Such a relationship is the basis for successful communication with listening audiences, say the five Nexus



musicians. And that, after all, is what the music business is all about. At least that is what it is about to Nexus trumpeter, Michael Drake. Drake is the group's leader by way of his front position in the Nexus stage formation. Strives for Feeling "Music is a means of expression," he explained. "And as musicians we want to get the feeling across." What comes across at a Nexus gig is high energy, but never hyper jazz. The music is like an excited child full of vim and vigor. Yet even when the sound is really cooking, there is a rhythmic call simmering underneath. "We have tried to avoid a nervous sound," said guitarist Danny Torroll. He noted that Nexus drummer Ding Lorenz is especially bent on keeping the group's energy from becoming frenetic. It was with Lorenz and trumpeter Drake that Nexus had its beginning four months ago. To make that long and complicated story short, let's just say Lorenz and Drake were old playing partners who happened upon three musicians in search of a group: guitarist Torroll, bassist Rick Nieznanski and keyboard artist Keith Montross. "It's amazing how fast we were able to come together as musicians," said Montross who is credited with naming the group. "To play well together, musicians must connect in terms of both ability and attitude," he added. "And we do." The Nexus connection is the result of the members' willingness to lend an ear. "Musically, it has been similar to learning a language," said Drake. "Each of us listens to what the other *says* on his instrument."

Conversations In Music Much of the group's playing is characterized by instrument conversation between electric guitar and keyboards, for example. But conversation among members themselves is just as common. "We sit down at least once a week, to talk and plan," said Drake. "It's healthy, just like in a marriage." In the beginning, it was decided that Montross would be the star composer, with Drake and Torroll doing the arranging of already written music. "Both Dan and I would like the time to do some original things," said Drake. "But we know Keith is a good writer, so we *say*, 'Okay.'" Taught Music Montrose, a former grade school music teacher in the Whitefish Bay School System, has given the group five original pieces. Among them are: "Indigo Passions," a cool number jazzed up by light and lively keyboard rhythms; "Jamaica Sunrise," a tone poem or musical description of arise-and-shine mood; and "Merb," a mellow piece lifted by feathery percussion sounds. Among the group's favorite recorded sounds are those of Chuck Mangione, the Becker Brothers, Pat Martino and George Duke. Nexus renditions of such music go heavy on the percussion as do Montross's compositions. "All of us play percussion in one number or another," said Drake. But drummer Lorenz, who has a private collection of an estimated 750 to 1,000 percussion instruments, is definitely the specialist. Each Tuesday when the group sets up for its three-set show down at Giorgio's, 6869 W. Forest Home Ave., Lorenz brings with him vibes, a marimba, a timpani, bongos, gongs, a glockenspiel, a Chinese bell tree, a Chinese fertility drum and, of course, basic drum set. It is in the playing of these percussion

instruments, especially by Lorenz, that the group's energy is kept from becoming frantic. But calm does not mean anticlimactic. In fact, climax is a major part of the group's character. Formula Used! "We use a build and release formula," said Drake. "We use it throughout the night, within sets and within individual numbers. It gets the audience involved. "Our biggest applause always comes at the end of a high point in the music. "It's like riding a horse that wants to run. For a while you hold back on the reins. Then you let go. That way the run is more exciting. "Exciting Milwaukee audiences to the language of Nexus is the group's immediate aim. "We would like to be able to make a living playing," said Drake, who like the group's other members, holds down more jobs in the music field. Nexus will have its chance to speak to many Milwaukeeans June 30 and July 1 when it appears at the Summerfest Miller Jazz Oasis.





## Jazz men

Nexus is (from left) Ding Lorenz on percussion, Dan Torroll on guitar, Keith Montross

on keyboards, Rick Nieznanski on bass and Mike Drake on horns. (Post photo by Richard Gasperic)

# 'Nexus' explores dynamics of jazz

By Denis Kavemeier  
Of the Post staff

Giorgi's, Milwaukee's south side jazz club at S. 68th St. and W. Forest Home Ave. in Greenfield, has been featuring the talents of a new group, Nexus, along with its regular weekend diet of Sweetbottom.

Nexus formed six months ago and have been performing Tuesday nights at Giorgi's since May 3.

Nexus plays a progressive brand of jazz, wide in dynamics with intricate percussion. In addition to the group's original music, Nexus performs the music

of Chuck Mangione, Passport, Brecker Brothers, George Duke and Michael Urbaniak.

The quintet features Keith Montross on keyboards, Mike Drake on horns and percussion, Dan Torroll on guitar, Michael (Ding) Lorenz on percussion and Rick Nieznanski on bass.

Montross, 26, of Milwaukee, plays a battery of keyboard devices on stage, using a Mini-Moog synthesizer, string synthesizer, Fender Rhodes and Yamaha electric pianos and Giorgi's grand piano.

He's also written and arranged six numbers for the group. A music education graduate of Lawrence University, Montross has taught music in Whitefish Bay's elementary schools.

Drake, 26, of Milwaukee, is an alumnus of the popular Family of Max group along with Nexus' drummer Lawrenz. Another Max alumnus, Warren Regratz, now plays with Sweetbottom.

Drake plays trumpet and flugelhorn and does some

composing for the group. He also helps Lawrenz with his intricate percussion.

Lorenz, 25, of Bay View, who has the largest percussion system of any band in the area. Besides a well-equipped drum set, Lorenz has gongs, wind chimes, a Chinese bell tree, timbals, a glockenspiel, vibraphones, congas, tympani and a steel drum.

Other group members consider Lorenz a "natural" percussionist, picking up detailed arrangements with great ease.

The guitarist, Dan Torroll, 22, of Greendale, does much of the group's arranging. Torroll plays his quick riffs on electric and acoustic guitars. His brother Mark plays drums with Sweetbottom.

Bass player Rick Nieznanski, 23, of Milwaukee's South Side, has an associate music degree from MATC. After playing with the jazz ensemble at Milwaukee Tech High School, Nieznanski played in top-40, rock and blues bands before joining Nexus.

A fine soloist on bass

guitar, Nieznanski embellishes his sound with electronic devices such as a phase shifter and distortion unit.

Nexus's main goal is to play steady, five nights a week. And that's not an easy task in a market like Milwaukee. The group tries to keep its sound tight by practicing three times a week in addition to their performances.

Nexus performed at Summerfest and the recent Alewives Festival in Milwaukee. They have bookings on Sept. 11-18 and at UW-Milwaukee's Kenwood Inn on Sept. 23-24.